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POEMS  
SCOTS AND ENGLISH



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BY  
JOHN BUCHAN

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SINCE there are many variants of our northern speech, it seems fitting to say that the Scots pieces in this little collection are written in the vernacular which is spoken in the hill country of the Lowlands, from the Cheviots to Galloway. Scots has never been to me a book-tongue; I could always speak it more easily than I could write it; and I dare to hope that the faults of my verses, great as they are, are not those of an antiquarian exercise.

J. B.





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BOOK I  
SCOTS



## *Midian's Evil Day*<sup>1</sup>

(From Alexander Cargill, Elder of the Kirk of the Remnant in the vale of Wae, to the Reverend Murdo Mucklethraw, Minister of the aforesaid Kirk, anent the Great Case recently argued in the House of Lords.)

DEAR Reverend Sir,—I tak my pen  
To tell yon great occasion when  
We garred our licht shine afore men,  
Yea, far and wide,  
And smote the oppressor but and ben  
For a' his pride.

<sup>1</sup> The occasion of these verses requires a note. The union in 1900 of the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church led to the secession of certain congregations of the former, who called themselves the Free Church, and maintained that the union involved a departure from the principles of that church and a breach of the conditions under which certain properties were held. They brought an action to establish their right to these properties, as the sole remaining repository of Free Church principles. This action was decided against the claimants in the Scottish courts, but, on appeal, the House of Lords, under the guidance of Lord Halsbury (then Lord Chancellor), reversed the decision.

Yoursel', ye mind, was far frae weel—  
A cauld ye catch't at Kippenshiel,  
Forbye rheumatics in your heel—  
    And thus it came,  
Fou though ye were o' holy zeal,  
    Ye stopped at hame.

For me, my lambin'-time was bye,  
The muirland hay was nane sae high,  
The men were thrang, the grund was dry,  
    Sae when ye spak,  
And bade me gang and testify,  
    I heldna back.

Wi' dowie hert I left that morn,  
Reflectin' on the waefu' scorn  
The Kirk maun thole, her courts forlorn,  
    Her pillars broke,  
While Amalek exalts his horn,  
    And fills his poke.

I pondered the mischances sair  
The Lord had garred puir Scotland bear  
Frae English folk baith late and ear'  
    Sin' Flodden year  
To the twae beasts at Carlisle fair  
    I bocht ower dear.

If true religion got a fa'  
Frae her auld courts and guid Scots law,  
What hope o' succour far awa'  
    'Mang godless chiels,  
Whae at the Word sae crouselly craw  
    And fling their heels.

As weel expect the Gospel sap 'ill  
Rise in uncovenantit thrapple  
As saw a ploom to raise an apple,  
    Or think a soo  
Fleein' aloft on the hoose-tap 'ill  
    Sit like a doo.

I like an owl in desert was,  
When to the coorts I buid to pass,  
Amang the crood to hear the Cause.  
    Nae freend I saw,—  
Juist some auld lads set oot in raws  
    And belchin' law.

But ane sat cockit in atween,  
A wee man but as gleg's a preen :  
A walth o' sense was in his een  
    And foreheid massy.  
"The Chancellor," I was tellt, when keen  
    I speired whae was he.



Wi' prayerfu' mind I watched the stert  
While Maister Johnston <sup>1</sup> played his pairt,  
And sune I fand my anxious hert

Gie a great loup.

"Yon Chancellor the ungodly's cairt,"

I said, "will coup."

O sir, that day I kent indeed  
There's men o' worth across the Tweed,  
Men whae are steadfast in the creed

As Moses sel',

Men whae the Word o' God can read

And cling to Hell.

I thocht they were a careless race,  
Decked oot in cauld Erastian claes,  
Whae traivelled a' in slippery ways,

Whase thochts were vain :

But noo I ken they've gifts and grace

E'en like oor ain.

A Lowden chiel <sup>2</sup>—black be his tryst !—

A wise-like man, but ill advised,

Led on the hosts o' Antichrist,

And threepit bauld,

That man could never back be wysed

To Calvin's fauld.

<sup>1</sup> Mr Henry Johnston, K.C., of the Scots Bar (afterwards Lord Johnston), led for the appellants.

<sup>2</sup> The leading counsel for the respondents was Mr R. B. Haldane (M.P. for East Lothian), afterwards Lord Chancellor of England.

He made the yett o' Heaven sae wide  
The veriest stirk could get inside :  
Puffed up he was wi' warldly pride  
    And fou o' German,  
Quotin' auld pagans for his guide  
    And sic-like vermin.

He feucht wi' Prophets, jouked wi' Psalms,  
He got his legs clean ower the trams,  
He garred th' Apostles skip like rams  
    To dae his biddin's :  
Oor auld Confessions were but shams,  
    Their loss guid riddance.

“ God foreordained some men to Hell—  
Granted, but man can please himsel'  
Up to a point—and if I dwell  
    Mair on free-will  
Than on election, I do well,  
    A Christian still.

“ For these are mysteries,” quo' he,  
“ Whereon nae twae men can agree,  
And sae it's richt for you and me—  
    The thing's sae kittle—  
Ane to consider half a lee,—  
    Whilk—matters little.

“ It’s a’,” he said, “ confuſion wild ;  
In siccan things the beſt’s a child ;  
Some walk an ell and ſome a mile ;  
    But never fear,  
Thae doots will a’ be reconciled  
    In higher ſphere.

“ Therefore a kirk, whaſe lamps are bright,  
Bequeathed by auld divines o’ might,  
Can fling them tapsalteerie quite,  
    And think nae ſhame ;  
For white is black and black is white,  
    It’s a’ the ſame.”

But what availed his carnal lear  
Against a man o’ faith and prayer ?  
As through the thriſtles gangs the ſhare  
    And dings them down,  
E’en ſae the Chancellor cleft him fair  
    Frae heel to croun.

He pinned him wi’ the Bible words,  
He clove at him wi’ Calvin’s ſwirds,  
He garred him loup aboot the boards  
    Wi’ muckle menſe,  
And bund him wi’ the hempen cords  
    O’ plain guid ſenſe.

“ Threep as ye please, it’s clear to me,  
Whether or no’ the twae agree,  
Baith doctrines were appoint to be  
    The Kirk’s chief pillar.  
If ane ye like to leave,” says he,  
    “ Ye leave the siller.”

Oh, wi’ what unction he restored  
The auld commandments o’ the Lord,  
Confoonded Bashan’s nowt that roared,  
    And ’stablished Hell !  
Knox was nae soonder in the Word  
    Nor Calvin’s sel’.

I’ll no’ deny yon Lowden chiel  
Was gleg as ony slippery eel,  
For twae-three men frae Kippenshiel  
    Begood to waver ;  
I half inclined to doot the Deil  
    A’ through his claver.

But when a man o’ faith and power  
Uprose, he couldna bide an hour :  
The weakest’s doots were tided ower  
    Anither towmont.  
The Kirk stood firm as auld stane tower  
    Wi’ safe endowment.

. . . . .

I hae a bull, a noble breed,  
A shorthorn wi' a massy heid,  
Wi' quarters fine and coat o' reid :  
    On ilka lea  
Frae Thurso to the banks o' Tweed  
    He bears the gree.

I ca'ed him Begg,<sup>1</sup> the same's his sire ;  
But noo for sign to a' the shire  
O' yon great day when frae the mire  
    Our feet we bore,  
His name shall be in field and byre  
    *" The Chancellor."*

1904

<sup>1</sup> A famous Free Church divine of the old school.

## *The Herd of Farawa*

Who in an April hailstorm discoursed to the traveller on the  
present discontents.

*Pastorum et solis exegit montibus ævum.*—VIRGIL.

L OSH, man ! Did ever mortal see  
Sic blasts o' snaw ? Ye'll bide a wee,  
Afore ye think to cross the lea,  
And mount the slack !  
Kin'le your pipe, and straucht your knee,  
And gie's your crack !

Hoo lang, ye speir ! An unco while !  
It's seeventy-sax 'ear came Aprile  
That I cam here frae Auchentyle—  
A bairn o' nine ;  
And mony's the dreich and dreary mile  
I've gaed sin' syne.

My folk were herds, sae roond the fauld  
Afore I was twae towmonts auld  
They fand me snowkin', crouse and bauld  
In snaw and seep—  
As Dauvid was to kingdoms called,  
Sae I to sheep.

I herdit first on Etterick side.  
Dod, man, I mind the stound o' pride  
Gaed through my hert, when near and wide  
    My dowgs I ran.  
Though no seeventeen till Lammastide  
    I walked a man.

I got a wife frae Eskdalemuir,  
O' dacent herdin' folk, and sair  
We wrocht for lang, baith late and 'ear,  
    For weans cam fast,  
And we were never aucht but puir  
    Frae first to last.

Tales I could tell wad gar ye grue  
O' snawy lambin's warstled through,  
O' drifty days, and win's that blew  
    Frae norlan' sky,  
And spates that filled the haughlands fou  
    And drooned the kye.

But, still and on, the life was fine,  
For yon were happier days langsyne ;  
For gear to hain, and gear to tine  
    I had nae care—  
Content I was wi' what was mine,  
    And blithe to share.

Sic flocks ye'll never see the day,  
Nae fauncy ills to mak ye wae,  
Nae fauncy dips wi' stawsome broo,  
    Wad fricht the French ;  
We wrocht alang the auld guid way,  
    And fand it stench.

Nae mawkit kets, nae scabbit een,  
But ilka yowe as trig's a preen ;  
Sic massy tups as ne'er were seen  
    Sin' Job's allowance,  
And lambs as thick on ilka green  
    As simmer gowans.

Whaur noo ae hirscl jimp can bide  
Three hirsels were the countra's pride,  
And mony a yaird was wavin' wide,  
    And floo'ers were hingin',  
Whaur noo is but the bare hillside,  
    And linties singin'.

. . . . .

And God ! the men ! Whaur could ye find  
Sic hertsome lads, sae crouse and kind ;  
Sic skeel o' sheep, sic sarious mind  
    At kirk and prayer—  
Yet aiblins no to haud or bind  
    At Boswells fair ?



Frae Galloway to Aiberdeen  
(I mind the days as 'twere yestreen)  
I've had my cantrips—Lord a wheen !  
    But through them a',  
The fear o' God afore my een,  
    I keep't the Law.

My nieves weel hoddit in my breeks,  
The Law I keep't, and turned baith cheeks  
Until the smiter, saft and meek's  
    A bairn at schule ;  
Syne struck, and laid him bye for weeks  
    To learn the fule.

Frae Melrose Cauld to Linkumdoddie,  
I'd fecht and drink wi' ony body ;  
Was there a couthy lad ? Then, dod, he  
    Sune fand his fellow,  
What time the tippenny or the toddy  
    Had garred us mellow.

Nae wark or ploy e'er saw me shirk ;  
I had an airm wad fell a stirk ;  
I traivelled ten lang mile to kirk  
    In wind and snaw ;  
I tell 'e, sir, frae morn to mirk,  
    I keep't the Law.

•           •           •           •           •

Weekly we gat, and never fail,  
Screeds marrowy as a pat o' kail,  
And awfu' as the Grey Meer's Tail  
    In Lammas rain,  
And stey and lang as Moffatdale,  
    And stieve's a stane.

Nae Gospel sowens fit for weans,  
But doctrines teuch as channel-stanes ;  
We heard the Word wi' anxious pains,  
    Sarious and happy.  
And half the week we piked the banes,  
    And fand them sappy.

Lang years aneath a man o' God  
I sat, my Bible on the brod ;  
He wasna feared to lift the rod  
    And scaud the errin' ;  
He walked whaur our great forbears trod,  
    And blest his farin'.

But noo we've got a bairnly breed,  
Whase wee-bit shilpit greetin' screed  
Sougths like a wast wind ower the heid,  
    Lichter than 'oo' ;  
Lassies and weans, it suits their need,  
    No me and you !

My dochter's servin' in the toun,  
She gangs to hear a glaikit loon,  
Whae rows his een, and twirls him roun'  
    Like ane dementit.  
Nae word o' Hell, nae sicht or soun'  
    O' sin repentit.

But juist a weary, yammerin' phrase  
O' "Saunts" and "Heaven" and "love" and  
    "praise,"  
Words that a grown man sudna üse,  
    God ! sic a scunner !  
I had to rise and gang my ways  
    To haud my denner.

At halesome fauts they lift their han',  
Henceforth, they cry, this new comman',  
Bide quate and doucely in the lan'  
    And love your brither—  
This is the total end o' man,  
    This and nae ither.

And that's their creed ! An owercome braw  
For folks that kenna fear or fa',  
Crouse birds that on their midden craw  
    Nor think o' scaith,  
That keep the trimmin' o' the Law  
    And scorn the pith.

It's no for men that nicht and day  
See the Almichty's awesome way,  
And ken themselves but ripps o' strae  
    Afore His wind,  
And, dark or licht, maun watch and pray  
    His grace to find.

My forbear, hunkerin' in a hag,  
Was martyred by the laird o' Lagg;  
He dee'd afore his heid wad wag  
    In God's denial.  
D'ye think the folk that rant and brag  
    Wad thole yon trial ?

Man, whiles I'd like to gang mysel  
And wile auld Claverse back frae Hell;  
Claverse, or maybe Tam Dalziel,  
    Wad stop their fleechin' ;  
I wager yon's the lads to mell  
    And mend sic preachin'.

. . . . .

Whaure'er I look I find the same,  
The world's nae gumption in its wame ;  
E'en sin' I mind the human frame  
    Grows scrimp and shauchled,  
O' a' man's warks ye canna name  
    Ane that's no bauchled.

There's mawkit sheep and feckless herds,  
And poopits fou o' senseless words ;  
Instead o' kail we sup on curds,  
    And wersh the taste o't ;  
To parritch-sticks we've turned our swirds,  
    Sae mak' the maist o't.

And poalitics ! I've seen the day  
I'd walk ten mile ower burn and brae  
To hear some billie hae his say  
    About the nation.  
Tories and a' their daft-like play  
    Fand quick damnation.

I thocht—for I was young—that folk  
Were a' the same ; I scorned the yoke  
O' cless or gear ; wi' pigs in poke  
    I took nae han'.  
I daured the hale wide warld to choke  
    The richts o' man.

It's still my creed, but hech ! sin' then  
We've got the richts and lost the men ;  
We've got a walth o' gear to spen'  
    And nane to spend it ;  
The warld is waitin' ripe to men',  
    And nane to mend it.

Our maisters are a flock o' daws,  
Led on by twae-three hoodie-craws ;  
They weir our siller, mak' our laws,  
    And God ! sic makin' !  
And we sit roun' wi' lood applause,  
    And cheer their crakin'.

We're great ; but daur we lift a nieve  
Wi'oot our neebors grant their leave ?  
We're free, folk say, to speak, believe,  
    Dae what we wull—  
And what's oor gain ? A din to deave  
    A yearlin' bull !

. . . . .  
A dwaibly warld ! I'll no deny  
There's orra blessin's. I can buy  
My baccy cheap, and feed as high  
    For half the siller ;  
For saxpence ony man can lie  
    As fou's the miller.

A bawbee buys a walth o' prent,  
And every gowk's in Paurliament ;  
The warld's reformed—but sir, tak tent,  
    For a' their threep,  
There's twae things noo that arena kent—  
    That's MEN and SHEEP.

1907

## *The Eternal Feminine*

**W**HEN I was a freckled bit bairn  
And cam in frae my ploys to the fire,  
Wi' my buits a' clamjamphried wi' shairn  
And my jaicket a' glaury wi' mire,  
I got gloomin' and glunchin' and paiks,  
And nae bite frae the press or the pan,  
And my auld grannie said as she skelped me to bed,  
"Hech, sirs, what a burden is man!"

When I was a lang-leggit lad,  
At waddin's and kirns a gey chield,  
I hae happit a lass in my maud  
And gone cauldride that she micht hae bield,  
And convoyed her bye bogles and stirks,  
A kiss at the hindmost my plan;  
But a' that I fand was the wecht o' her hand,  
And "Hech, sirs, what a burden is man!"

When Ailie and me were made yin  
We set up in a canty bit cot;  
Sair wrocht we day oot and day in,  
We were unco content wi' oor lot.

But whiles wi' a neebor I'd tak  
A gless that my heid couldna stan' ;  
Syne she'd greet for a week, and nae word wad she speak  
But " Hech, sirs, what a burden is man ! "

She dee'd, and my dochter and me  
For the lave wi' ilk ither maun shift.  
Nae tentier lass could ye see ;  
The wooers cam doun like a drift ;  
But sune wi' an unco blae glower  
Frae the doorstep they rade and they ran,  
And she'd sigh to hersel', as she gae'd to the well,  
" Hech, sirs, what a burden is man ! "

She's mairrit by noo and she's got  
A white-heided lass o' her ain.  
White-heided mysel, as I stot  
Roond the doors o' her shouther I'm fain.  
What think ye that wean said yestreen ?  
I'll tell ye, believe't if ye can ;  
She primmed up her mou' and said saft as a doo,  
" Hech, sirs, what a burden is man ! "

1912



## *The South Countrie*

**I** NEVER likit the Kingdom o' Fife—  
Its kail's as cauld as its wind and rain,  
And the folk that bide benorth o' the Clyde  
They speak a langwidge that's no my ain.  
Doun in the west is a clarty nest,  
And the big stane cities are no for me ;  
Sae I'll buckle my pack on my auld bent back  
And tak the road for the South Countrie.

Whaur sall I enter the Promised Land,  
Ower the Sutra or doun the Lyne,  
Up the side o' the water o' Clyde  
Or cross the muirs at the heid o' Tyne,  
Or staucherin' on by Crawfordjohn  
Yont to the glens whaur Tweed rins wee ?—  
It's maitter sma' whaur your road may fa'  
Gin it land ye safe in the South Countrie.

Yon are the hills that my hert kens weel,  
Hame for the weary, rest for the auld,  
Braid and high as the Aprile sky,  
Blue on the taps and green i' the fauld :

At ilka turn a bit wanderin' burn,  
And a canty biggin' on ilka lea—  
There's nocht sae braw in the wide world's schaw  
As the heughs and holms o' the South Countrie.

Yon are the lads that my hert loes weel,  
Frank and couthy and kind to a',  
Wi' the open broo and the mirthfu' mou  
And the open door at the e'enin's fa' ;  
A trig hamesteid and a lauchin' breed  
O' weans that hearten the auld to see—  
Sma' or great, can ye find the mate  
O' the folk that bide in the South Countrie ?

The lichtest fit that traivels the roads  
Maun lag and drag as the end grows near ;  
Threescore and ten are the years o' men,  
And I'm bye the bit by a lang lang year.  
Sae I'll seek my rest in the land loe'd best,  
And ask nae mair than that God sall gie  
To my failin' een for the hinmost scene  
The gentle hills o' the South Countrie.

1916

## *The Shorter Catechism*

(With Proofs)

WHEN I was young and herdit sheep,  
I read auld tales o' Wallace wight ;  
My heid was fou o' sangs and threep  
O' folk that feared nae mortal might.  
But noo I'm auld and weel I ken  
We're made alike o' gowd and mire ;  
There's saft bits in the stievest men,  
The bairnliest's got a spunk o' fire.  
Sae hearken to me, lads,  
It's truith that I tell ;—  
There's nae man a' courage—  
*I ken by mysel'.*

I've been an elder forty year,  
I've tried to keep the narrow way,  
I've walked afore the Lord in fear,  
I've never missed the kirk a day,  
I've read the Bible in and oot,  
I ken the feck o't clean by hert ;—  
But still and on I sair misdoot  
I'm better noo than at the stert.

Sae hearken to me, lads,  
It's truith I maintain !—  
Man's works are but rags, for  
*I ken by my ain.*

I hae a name for dacent trade ;  
I'll wager a' the countryside  
Wad swear nae trustier man was made  
The ford to soom, the bent to bide.  
But when it comes to coupin' horse  
I'm juist like a' that e'er were born,  
I fling my heels and tak my course—  
I'd sell the minister the morn.  
Sae hearken to me, lads,  
It's truith that I tell :—  
There's nae man deid honest—  
*I ken by mysel'.*

1911



## THEOCRITUS IN SCOTS



## THEOCRITUS IN SCOTS

### *The Kirn*<sup>1</sup>

(ldyll vii)

'T WAS last back-end that me and Dauvit Sma'  
And Robert Todd, the herd at Meldonha',  
The hairst weel ower and under rape and thack,  
Set oot to keep the kirn at Haystounslack,  
Wat Laidlaw's fairm—for Wat's the rale stench breed  
The Borders kenned afore the auld lairds dee'd,  
And a' the soor-milk Wast ran down the Tweed.

We werena half the road, nor bye the grain  
Whaur auncient Druids left the standin' stane,  
When Gidden Scott cam heinchin' ower the muir,  
Gidden the wale o' men ; ilk kirn and fair,

<sup>1</sup> The Greek text has not been followed in the songs, as it would be hard to find equivalents for Lycidas and Simichidas in Lowland Scots. Jock's song is a free paraphrase of Victor Hugo's *Guitare*. How close that famous lyric is to the Theocritean manner will be admitted by those who remember Walter Headlam's Greek version of it.



Clippin' and spainin', was a cheerier place  
For ae sicht o' his honest bawsened face.  
He was a drover, famed frae Clyde to Spey,  
The graundest juidge o' beasts—a dealer tae.  
His furthy coat o' tup's 'oo spun at hame,  
His weel-worn maud that buckled roond his wame,  
His snootit kep that hid the broos aneath,  
His buits wi' tacketts like a harrow's teeth,  
His shairny leggin's and his mighty staff  
Proclaimed him for a drover three mile aff.

“ Losh ! lads,” he cried, “ whaur are ye traivellin' noo,  
Trig as the lassies decked for them they loe ?  
Is't to a countra splore, or to the toun  
Whaur creeshy baillies to their feasts sit down ?  
Or is't some waddin' wi' its pipes and reels  
That gars the chuckies loup ahint your heels ? ”

“ Weel met,” says I. “ The day our jaunt we mak  
To join Wat Laidlaw's kirk at Haystounslack.  
Lang is the gait, and, sin' it's pairtly yours,  
What say ye to a sang to wile the 'oors ?  
In a' the land frae Wigtoun to the Mearns  
There's nane that ploos sae straucht the rig o' Burns  
As your guid sel' (so rins the countra sough) ;  
And I, though frae sic genius far eneuch,  
I, tae, hae clinkit rhymes at orra whiles.  
We'll niffer sangs to pass the muirland miles.”

"Na, Jock," says he, and wagged a sarious pow,  
"Sma' share hae I in that divinest lowe.  
A roopy craw as weel a pairt micht claim  
I' the laverock's sang as me in Robin's fame.  
But sin' we're a' guid freends, I'll sing a sang  
I made last Monday drovin' ower the Whang."<sup>1</sup>

### *Gidden's Song*

SIN' Andra took the jee and gaed aff across the sea  
I'm as dowff as ony fisher-wife that watches on the sand,  
I'm as restless as a staig, me that aince was like a craig,  
When I think upon yon far frem't land.

We had aften cuisten oot, I mindna what about ;  
We had feucht a bit and flytit and gien and taen the  
blow ;  
But oor dander was nae mair than the rouk in simmer air,  
For I loe'd him as a lassie loes her joe.

He had sic a couthy way, aye sae canty and sae gay ;  
He garred a body's hert loup up and kept the warld  
gaun roun' ;  
The dreichest saul could see he had sunlicht in his ee,  
And there's no his marrow left in the toun.

<sup>1</sup> The Lang Whang is the old Edinburgh-Lanark road.

We were 'greed like twae stirks that feed amang the birks,  
My every thocht I shared wi' him, his hinmost plack  
was mine ;  
We had nocht to hide frae ither, he was mair to me than  
brither ;  
But that's a' bye wi't langsyne.

As I gang oot and in, in my heid there rins a tüne,  
Some tüne o' Andra's playin' in the happy days that's  
gane.  
When I sit at festive scene there's a mist comes ower my  
een  
For the kind lad that's left me my lane.

So Gidden spak, and ower the lave o' us cam  
A sadness waur than penitential psalm.  
The tüne was cried ; nae jovial rantin' stave  
Wad set a mood sae pensive and sae grave.  
Sae, followin' on, I cleared my hass and sung  
A sang I made langsyne when I was young.

### *Jock's Song*

SING, lads, and bend the bicker ; gloamin' draps  
On Wiston side.  
A' ye that dwal in sicht o' Tintock's taps  
Frae Tweed to Clyde

Gae stert your reels and ding the warlock Care  
At young bluid's call.

*The wind that blows frae yont the mountain muir  
Will steal my saul.*

Mind ye the lass that üsed to bide langsyne  
At Coulter-fit ?

(Gae pipe your sprigs, for youth is ill to bin'  
And pleasures flit.)

Her mither keep't the inn, and down the stair  
A' day wad bawl.

*The wind that blows frae yont the mountain muir  
Will steal my saul.*

My heid rins round—I think they ca'd her Jean.

She looked sae high,

She walked sae prood, it micht hae been the Queen

As she gaed bye,

Buskit sae trig, and ower her yellow hair

A denty shawl.

*The wind that blows frae yont the mountain muir  
Will steal my saul.*

Ae day the King himsel' was ridin' through

And saw her face.

He telled his son, " For ae kiss o' her mou

I'd change my place

Wi' ony gangrel, roup my royal share,

My kingly hall."

*The wind that blows frae yont the mountain muir  
Will steal my saul.*

I kenna if I loe'd the lassie true,  
But this I ken ;  
To get a welcome frae her een o' blue,  
To see again  
Her dimpled cheek, ten 'ears o' life I'd spare  
In prison wall.  
*The wind that blaws frae yont the mountain muir  
Will steal my saul.*

Ae simmer morn when a' the lift was clear  
And saft winds sighed,  
Wi' kilted coats I saw her wanderin' near  
The burnie's tide.  
Thinks I, Queen Mary was na half as fair  
In days o' aul'.  
*The wind that blaws frae yont the mountain muir  
Will steal my saul.*

Sing, lads, and bend the bicker ; e'enin' fa's—  
My denty doo  
Has sell't hersel' for gowd and silken braws  
That weemen loe.  
A feckless laird has bocht her beauty rare,  
Her love, her all.  
*The wind that blaws frae yont the mountain muir  
Will steal my saul.*

I watched them as their coach gaed ower the pass  
Wi' blindit een ;  
A shilpit carle aside the browest lass  
That Scotland's seen.  
Far, far she's gane, and toom the warld and puir  
Whaur I maun dwal.  
*The wind that blaws frae yont the mountain muir*  
*Will steal my saul.*

A' day I wander like a restless ghaist  
Ower hill and lea ;  
The gun hangs in the spence, the rod's unüsed,  
The dowg gangs free.  
At nicht I dream, and O ! my dreams are sair,  
My hert's in thrall.  
*The wind that blaws frae yont the mountain muir*  
*Has stown my saul.*

Loud Gidden spak ; " Weel dune !—The convoy's ower.  
Here we maun pairt, for I'm for Auchenlour.  
Oor forbears, when they set a makars' test  
Gied cups and wreaths to him that sang the best.  
Nae drink hae I, thae muirland floo'ers are wauf,  
Sae tak for awms my trustit hazel staff."

We cried guid-farin' to his massy back,  
And turned intil the road for Haystounslack.  
Aroond the hills and heughs the gloamin' crap,  
And a brow mune cam ridin' ower the slap.

The stirlin's crooded thick as flees in air,  
An auld blackcock was flytin' on the muir.  
Afore the steadin' cairts were settin' doun  
Ilk snoddit lassie in her kirk-gaun gown,  
And bauld young lads were swingin' up the braes,  
Ilk ane wi' glancin' een and dancin' taes.  
The fiddles scrapit and atower the din  
The "Floo'ers o' Embro'" soughed oot on the win'.  
Furth frae the ben cam sic a noble reek  
That hungry folk maun snowk but daurna speak ;—  
Haggis and tripe, and puddin's black, and yill,  
And guid saut beef and braxy frae the hill,  
Crisp aiten farles, bannocks and seein' kail ;  
And at the door stood Wat to cry us hail.  
His walie nieves upheld a muckle bowl  
Whase spicy scent was unction to the saul.  
His ladle plowtered in the reamin' brew,  
And for us three he filled the rummers fou.  
Nae nectar that the auld gods quaffed on hie,  
Nae heather wine wanchancy warlocks prie,  
Nae Well o' Bethlehem or Siloam's pùle,  
Was ever half as guid as Wattie's yill.

Heaven send anither 'ear that I gang back  
To drink wi' honest folk at Haystounslack !

1916

## THEOCRITUS IN SCOTS

### *The Fishers*

(Idyll **xxi**)

'**T**IS puirtith sooples heid and hand  
And gars inventions fill the land ;  
And dreams come fast to folk that lie  
Wi' nocht atween them and the sky.

Twae collier lads frae near Lasswade,  
Auld skeely fishers, fand their bed  
Ae simmer's nicht aside the shaw  
Whaur Manor rins by Cademuir Law.  
Dry flowe-moss made them pillows fine,  
And, for a bield to kep the win',  
A muckle craig owerhung the burn,  
A' thacked wi' blaeberry and fern.  
Aside them lay their rods and reels,  
Their flee-books and their auncient creels.  
The pooches o' their moleskin breeks  
Contained unlawfu' things like cleeks,  
For folk that fish to fill their wame  
Are no fastedious at the game.



The twae aye took their jaunts thegither ;  
Geordie was ane and Tam the ither.  
Their chaumer was the mune-bricht sky,  
The siller stream their lullaby.

When knocks in touns were chappin' three,  
Tam woke and rubbed a blinkin' ee.  
It was the 'oor when troots are boun'  
To gulp the May-flee floatin' doun,  
Afore the sun is in the glens  
And dim are a' the heughs and dens.

TAM

" Short is the simmer's daurk, they say,  
But this ane seemed as lang's the day ;  
For siccan dreams as passed my sicht  
I never saw in Januar' nicht.  
If some auld prophet chiel were here  
I wad hae cürious things to speir."

GEORDIE

" It's conscience gars the nightmares rin,  
Sae, Tam my lad, what hae ye dune ? "

TAM

" Nae ill ; my saul is free frae blame,  
Nor hae I wrocht ower hard my wame,  
For last I fed, as ye maun awn,  
On a sma' troot and pease-meal scone.

But hear my dream, for aiblins you  
May find a way to riddle't true. . . .

I thocht that I was castin' steady  
At the pùle's tail ayont the smiddy,  
Wi' finest gut and sma'est flee,  
For the air was clear and the water wee ;  
When sudden wi' a rowst and swish  
I rase a maist enormous fish . . .  
I struck and heuked the monster shüre,  
Guidsakes ! to see him loup in air !  
It was nae saumon, na, nor troot ;  
To the last yaird my line gaed oot,  
As up the stream the warlock ran  
As wild as Job's Leviathan.  
I got him stopped below the linn,  
Whaur verra near I tummled in,  
Aye prayin' hard my heuk wad haud ;  
And syne he turned a dorty jaud,  
Sulkin' far down amang the stanes.  
I tapped the butt to stir his banes.  
He warsled here and plowtered there,  
But still I held him ticht and fair,  
The water rinnin' oxter-hie,  
The sweat aye drippin' in my ee.  
Sae bit by bit I wysed him richt  
And broke his stieve and fashious micht,  
Till sair fordome he cam to book  
And walloped in a shallow crook.

I had nae gad, sae doun my wand  
I flang and pinned him on the sand.  
I claucht him in baith airms and peched  
Ashore—he was a mighty wecht ;  
Nor stopped till I had got him shüre  
Amang the threshes on the muir.

Then, Geordie lad, my een I rowed  
The beast was made o' solid gowd !—  
Sic ferlie as was never kenned,  
A' glitterin' gowd frae end to end !  
I lauched, I grat, my kep I flang,  
I danced a sprig, I sang a sang.  
And syne I wished that I micht dee  
If wark again was touched by me. . . .

Wi' that I woke ; nae fish was there—  
Juist the burnside and empty muir.  
Noo tell me honest, Geordie lad,  
Think ye yon daftlike aith will haud ? ”

#### GEORDIE

“ Tuts, Tam ye fule, the aith ye sware  
Was like your fish, nae less, nae mair.  
For dreams are nocht but simmer rouk,  
And him that trusts them hunts the gowk. . . .  
It's time we catched some fish o' flesh  
Or we will baith gang brekfastless.”

1916

INTER ARMA



## INTER ARMA

### *Sweet Argos*

An Epistle from Jock in billets to Sandy in the trenches.

WHEN the Almichty took His hand  
Frae shapin' skies and seas and land,  
Some orra bits left ower He fand,  
Riddled them roun'—  
A clart o' stane and wud and sand—  
And made this toun.

A glaury loan, a tumblin' kirk,  
Twae glandered mears, a dwaibly stirk,  
Hens, ae auld wife, a wauflike birk—  
That's whaur I dwal,  
While you are fechtin' like a Turk  
Ayont Thiepval.

The weet drips through the bauks abune,  
Ootbye the cundies roar and rin,  
There's comfort naether oot nor in,  
The wind gangs blather;—  
We maun be michty sunk in sin  
To earn sic wather.

But, Sandy lad, for you it's waur,  
You on that muckle Zollern scaur,  
Your lintwhite locks a' fyled wi' glaur,  
And hungry—my word !  
While Gairmans dae the best they daur  
To send ye skyward. . . .

. . . . .

'Twas late yestreen that we cam doun  
The road that leads frae Morval toun ;  
We cam like mice, nae sang nor soun',  
Nae daff nor jest ;  
Like ghaists that trail the midnight roun'  
We crap to rest.

For sax weeks hunkerin' in a hole  
We'd kenned the warst a man can thole—  
Nae skirlin' dash frae goal to goal  
Yellin' like wud,  
But the lang stell that wechts the soul  
And tooms the bluid.

Weel, yestereen we limped alang,  
Me and auld Dave frae Cambuslang,  
And Andra, him that had the gang  
In Tamson's mills,  
And Linton Bob that wrocht amang  
The Pentland Hills.

And as we socht oor shauchlin' way  
Atween the runts o' Bernafay,  
The mune ayont the darkenin' brae  
Lichted a gap.  
Bob peched. "Ma God," I heard him say,  
"The Cauldstaneslap!"

Syne we won ower the hinmost rig  
Amang the dumps, whaur warm and trig  
The braziers lowe and wee trucks jig  
Frae bing to ree.  
Dave gripped my airm. "It's fair Coatbrig!"  
He stepped oot free. . . .

. . . . .  
This morn I'm sittin' on a box,  
Reddin' an unco pair o' socks,  
Watchin' the yaird whaur muckle docks  
And nettles blaw,  
And turks' caps, marygolds and phlox  
Stand in a raw.

The berry busses hing wi' weet,  
The smiddy clang comes down the street,  
A coo is routin', bairnies greet,  
A young cock craws.—  
I shut my een; my traivelled feet  
Were back i' the Shaws.



Back twenty year. A tautit wean,  
I heard my granny's voice complain  
O' bursted buits : I saw the rain  
Rin aff the byre ;  
The burn wi' foamin' yellow mane  
Roared down the swire.

A can o' worms ae pooch concealed,  
The tither scones weel brooned and jeeled ;  
Let eld sit cowerin' in the bield,  
Youth maun be oot ;  
The rain may pour, he's for the field  
To catch a troot. . . .

. . . . .  
And, Sandy lad, a stound o' joy  
Gaed through my breist. A halfin's ploy,  
An auld wife's tale, a bairnie's toy,  
A lassie's favour,  
Are things nae war can clean destroy  
Nor kill the savour.

It's in sma' things that greatness lies,  
The simple aye confoonds the wise,  
The towers that ettle at the skies  
Crack, coup and tummle,  
The blather, swalled to unco size,  
Bursts wi' a rummle. . . .

Straucht to the Deil oor hainin's fly ;  
A spate can droon the best o' kye :  
The day oor heids we cairry high  
And wanton rarely :—  
The morn in some black sheugh dounbye  
We floonder sairly.

The breist o' man is fortune-pruif,  
He heeds nor jade nor deil nor cuif,  
If twae-three things the Guid Folk give  
His lot to cheer,  
The sma' things that oor mortal luve  
Maun aye haud dear.

What gars us fecht ? It's no the law,  
Nor poaliticians in a raw,  
Nor hate o' folk we never saw ;—  
Oot in yon hell  
I've killed a wheen—the job wad staw  
Auld Hornie's sel'.

It's luve, my man, nae less, nae mair,—  
Luve o' auld freends at kirk and fair,  
Auld-farrant sangs that memories bear  
O' but and ben,  
Some wee cot-hoose far up the muir  
Or down the glen.

And Gairmans are nae doot the same:  
The lad ye've stickin' in the wame  
Fechts no for deevilment or fame,  
    But juist for pride  
In his bit dacent canty hame  
    By some burnside.

It's queer that the Almichty's plan  
Sud set oot man to fecht wi' man  
For the same luve—their native lan',  
    And wife and weans.  
It's queer, but threep the best ye can,  
    The truth remains.

The warld's a fecht. Frae star to stane  
The hale Creation strives in pain.  
Paiks maun be tholed by ilk alane,  
    The cup be drainit,  
If man's to get the bunemost gain  
    That God's ordainit.

But luve's the fire that keeps him gaun,  
Ilk puir forjaskit weariet man.  
Hate sparks like pouter in the pan,  
    And pride will flicker,  
But luve will burn till skies are faun,  
    Mair clear and siccar.

And a' we socht o' honest worth  
We'll find again in nobler birth,  
For Heaven itsel' begins on earth,  
And caps the riggin'  
O' what in pain and toil and dearth  
We've aye been biggin'.

Nae walth o' gowden streets for me ;  
I ask but that my een sud see  
The auld green hopes, the broomy lea.  
The clear burn's püles,  
And wander whaur the wind blaws free  
Frae heather hills.

. . . . .

Sae, Sandy, if it's written true  
That you and me sud warstle through,  
Wi' whatna joy we'll haud the ploo  
And delve the yaird !  
Ten thoosandfauld the mair we'll loe  
Oor Border swaird !

But if like ither dacent men  
We've looked oor last on Etterick glen  
And some day sune will see the en'  
That brings nae shame,  
We'll face't,—for in that 'oor we'll ken  
We're hame, we're hame.

1916

## *On Leave*

I HAD auchteen months o' the war,  
Steel and pouter and reek,  
Fitsore, weary and wauf,—  
Syne I got hame for a week.

Daft-like I entered the toun,  
I scarcely kenned for my ain.  
I sleepit twae days in my bed,  
The third I buried my wean.

The wife sat greetin' at hame,  
While I wandered oot to the hill,  
My hert as cauld as a stane,  
But my heid gaun roond like a mill.

I wasna the man I had been,—  
Juist a gangrel dozin' in fits ;—  
The pin had faun oot o' the warld,  
And I doddered amang the bits.

I clamb to the Lammerlaw  
And sat me doun on the cairn ;—  
The best o' my freends were deid,  
And noo I had buried my bairn ;—

The stink o' the gas in my nose,  
The colour o' bluid in my ee,  
And the biddin' o' Hell in my lug  
To curse my Maker and dee.

But up in that gloamin' hour,  
On the heather and thymy sod,  
Wi' the sun gaun doun in the Wast  
I made my peace wi' God. . . .

I saw a thoosand hills,  
Green and gowd i' the licht,  
Roond and backit like sheep,  
Huddle into the nicht.

But I kenned they werena hills,  
But the same as the mounds ye see  
Doun by the back o' the line  
Whaur they bury oor lads that dee.

They were juist the same as at Loos  
Whaur we happit Andra and Dave.—  
There was naething in life but death,  
And a' the warld was a grave.

A' the hills were graves,  
The graves o' the deid langsyne,  
And somewhere oot in the Wast  
Was the grummlin' battle-line.

But up frae the howe o' the glen  
Came the waft o' the simmer een.  
The stink gaed oot o' my nose,  
And I sniffed it, caller and clean.

The smell o' the simmer hills,  
Thyme and hinny and heather,  
Jeniper, birk and fern,  
Rose in the lown June weather.

It minded me o' auld days,  
When I wandered barefit there,  
Guddlin' troot in the burns,  
Howkin' the tod frae his lair.

If a' the hills were graves  
There was peace for the folk aneath  
And peace for the folk abune,  
And life in the hert o' death. . . .

Up frae the howe o' the glen  
Cam the murmur o' wells that creep  
To swell the heids o' the burns,  
And the kindly voices o' sheep.

And the cry o' a whaup on the wing,  
And a plover seekin' its bield.—  
And oot o' my crazy lugs  
Went the din o' the battlefield.

I flang me doun on my knees  
And I prayed as my hert wad break,  
And I got my answer sune,  
For oot o' the nicht God spake.

As a man that wauks frae a stound  
And kens but a single thocht,  
Oot o' the wind and the nicht  
I got the peace that I socht.

Loos and the Lammerlaw,  
The battle was feucht in baith,  
Death was roond and abune,  
But life in the hert o' death.

A' the warld was a grave,  
But the grass on the graves was green,  
And the stanes were bields for hames,  
And the laddies played atween.

Kneelin' aside the cairn  
On the heather and thymy sod,  
The place I had kenned as a bairn,  
I made my peace wi' God.



## *The Kirk Bell*

WHEN oor lads gaed ower the tap  
It was nine o' a Sabbath morn.  
I felt as my hert wad stap,  
And I wished I had ne'er been born ;  
I wished I had ne'er been born  
For I feared baith the foe and mysel',  
Till there fell on my ear forlorn  
The jow o' an auld kirk bell.  
For a moment the guns were deid,  
Sae I heard it faint and far ;  
And that bell was ringin' inside my heid  
As I stauchered into the war.

I heard nae ither soun',  
Though the air was a wild stramash,  
And oor barrage beat the grun'  
Like the crack o' a cairter's lash,  
Like the sting o' a lang whup lash ;  
And ilk breath war a prayer or an aith,  
And whistle and drone and crash  
Made the pitiless sang o' death.

But in a' that deavin' din  
Like the cry o' the lost in Hell,  
I was hearkenin' to a peacefu' tūne  
In the jow o' a far-off bell.

I had on my Sabbath claes,  
And was steppin' doucely the gait  
To the kirk on the broomy braes ;  
I was standin' aside the yett,  
Crackin' aside the yett ;  
And syne I was singin' loud  
'Mang the lasses snod and blate  
Wi' their roses and southernwood.  
I hae nae mind o' the tex'  
For the psalm was the thing for me,  
And I gied a gey wheen Huns their paiks  
To the tūne o' auld " Dundee."

They tell me I feucht like wud,  
And I've got a medal to shaw,  
But in a' that habble o' smoke and bluid  
My mind was far awa' ;  
My mind was far awa'  
In the peace o' a simmer glen,  
Daunderin' hame ower the heathery law,  
Wi' twae-three ither men. . . .  
But sudden the lift grew red  
Ere we wan to the pairtin' place ;  
And the next I kenned I was lyin' in bed  
And a Sister washin' my face.

My faither was stench U.P. ;  
Nae guid in Rome could he fin' ;  
But, this war weel ower, I'm gaun back to see  
That kirk ahint the line—  
That kirk ahint oor line,  
And siller the priest I'll gie  
To pray for the sauls o' the deid langsyne  
Whae bigged the steeple for me.  
It's no that I'm chief wi' the Pape,  
But I owe the warld to yon bell ;  
And the beadle that swung the rape  
Will get half a croon for himsel'.

1917

## *Home Thoughts from Abroad*

**A**FTER the war, says the papers, they'll no be content  
at hame,

*The lads that hae feucht wi' death twae 'ear i' the mud and  
the rain and the snaw ;*

*For aifter a sodger's life the shop will be unco tame ;*

*They'll ettle at fortune and freedom in the new lands far  
awa'.*

No me !

By God ! No me !

Aince we hae lickit oor faes

And aince I get oot o' this hell,

For the rest o' my leevin' days

I'll mak a pet o' mysel'.

I'll haste me back wi' an eident fit

And settle again in the same auld bit.

And oh ! the comfort to snowk again

The reek o' my mither's but-and-ben,

The wee box-bed and the ingle neuk

And the kail-pat hung frae the chimley-heuk !

I'll gang back to the shop like a laddie to play,  
Tak down the shutters at skreigh o' day,  
And weigh oot floor wi' a carefu' pride,  
And hear the clash o' the countraside.  
I'll wear for ordinar' a roond hard hat,  
A collar and dicky and black cravat.  
If the weather's wat I'll no stir ootbye  
Wi'oot an umbrella to keep me dry.  
I think I'd better no tak a wife—  
I've had a' the adventure I want in life.—  
But at nicht, when the doors are steeked, I'll sit,  
While the bleeze louns high frae the aiken ruit,  
And smoke my pipe aside the crook.  
And read in some douce auld-farrant book ;  
Or crack wi' Davie and mix a rummer,  
While the auld wife's pow nid-nods in slum'er ;  
And hark to the winds gaun tearin' bye  
And thank the Lord I'm sae warm and dry.

When simmer brings the lang bricht e'en,  
I'll daunder doun to the bowling-green,  
Or delve my yaird and my roses tend  
For the big floo'er-show in the next back-end.  
Whiles, when the sun blinks aifter rain,  
I'll tak my rod and gang up the glen ;  
Me and Davie, we ken the püles  
Whaur the troot grow great in the howes o' the hills ;  
And, wanderin' back when the gloamin' fa's  
And the midges dance in the hazel shaws,

We'll stop at the yett ayont the hicht  
And drink great wauchts o' the scented nicht,  
While the hoose lamps kin'le raw by raw  
And a yellow star hings ower the Law.  
Davie will lauch like a wean at a fair  
And nip my airm to mak certain shüre  
That we're back frae yon place o' dule and dreid,  
To oor ain kind warld—

*But Davie's deid !*

*Nae mair gude nor ill can betide him.*

*We happit him down by Beaumont toun,*

*And the half o' my hert's in the mools aside him.*

1917

*Fragment of an Ode in Praise of the  
Royal Scots Fusiliers*

Y E'LL a' hae heard tell o' the Fusilier Jocks,  
The famous auld Fusilier Jocks !  
They're as stieve as a stane,  
And as teuch as a bane,  
And as gleg as a pack o' muircocks.  
They're maistly as braid as they're lang,  
And the Gairman's a pump off the fang  
When he faces the fire in their ee.  
They're no verra bonny,  
I question if ony  
Mair terrible sicht ye could see  
Than a chairge o' the Fusilier Jocks.  
It gars Hindenburg swear  
" *Gott in Himmel*, nae mair  
O' thae sudden and scan'alous shocks ! "  
And the cannon o' Krupp  
Ane and a' they shut up  
Like a pentit bit jaick-in-the-box,  
At the rush o' the Fusilier Jocks.

. . . . .

The Kaiser he says to his son  
 (The auld ane that looks like a fox)—  
 “ I went ower far  
 When I stertit this war,  
 Forgettin’ the Fusilier Jocks.  
 I could manage the French and Italians and Poles,  
 The Russians and Tartars and yellow Mongols,  
 The Serbs and the Belgians, the English and Greeks,  
 And even the lads that gang wantin’ the breeks ;  
 But what o’ thae Fusilier Jocks,  
 That stopna for duntin’ and knocks ?  
 They’d rin wi’ a yell  
 Ower the plainstanes o’ Hell ;  
 They’re no men ava—they are rocks !  
 They’d gang barefit  
 Through the Bottomless Pit,  
 And they’ll tak Berlin in their socks,—  
 Will thae terrible Fusilier Jocks !  
 Thae terrible Fusilier Jocks ! . . . ”

1917



## *The Great Ones*

A E morn aside the road frae Bray  
I wrocht my squad to mend the track ;  
A feck o' sodgers passed that way  
And garred me often straucht my back.

By cam a General on a horse,  
A jinglin' lad on either side.  
I gie'd my best salute of course,  
Weel pleased to see sic honest pride.

And syne twae Frenchmen in a cawr—  
Yon are the lads to speel the braes ;  
They covered me inch-deep wi' glaur  
And verra near ran ower my taes.

And last the pipes, and at their tail  
Oor gaucy lads in martial line.  
I stopped my wark and cried them hail,  
And wished them weel for auld lang syne.

. . . . .

An auld chap plooin' on the muir  
Ne'er jee'd his heid nor held his han',  
But drave his furrow straucht and fair,—  
Thinks I, " But ye're the biggest man."

1916

## *Fisher Jamie*

PUIR Jamie's killed. A better lad  
Ye wadna find to busk a flee  
Or burn a pile or wield a gad  
Frae Berwick to the Clints o' Dee.

And noo he's in a happier land.—  
It's Gospel truth and Gospel law  
That Heaven's yett maun open stand  
To folk that for their country fa'.

But Jamie will be ill to mate ;  
He lo'ed nae mäsic, kenned nae tūnes  
Except the sang o' Tweed in spate,  
Or Talla loupin' ower its linns.

I sair misdoot that Jamie's heid  
A croun o' gowd will never please ;  
He liked a kep o' dacent tweed  
Whaur he could stick his casts o' flees.

If Heaven is a' that man can dream  
And a' that honest herts can wish,  
It maun provide some muirland stream,  
For Jamie dreamed o' nocht but fish.

And weel I wot he'll up and speir  
In his bit blate and canty way,  
Wi' kind Apostles standin' near  
Whae in their time were fishers tae.

He'll offer back his gowden croun  
And in its place a rod he'll seek,  
And bashfu'-like his herp lay down  
And speir a leister and a cleek.

For Jims had aye a poachin' whim ;  
He'll sune grow tired, wi' lawfu' flee  
Made frae the wings o' cherubim,  
O' castin' ower the Crystal Sea. . . .

I picter him at gloamin' tide  
Steekin' the backdoor o' his hame  
And hastin' to the waterside  
To play again the auld auld game ;

And syne wi' saumon on his back,  
Catch't clean against the Heavenly law,  
And Heavenly byliffs on his track,  
Gaun linkin' doun some Heavenly shaw.

1916



BOOK II  
ENGLISH



*Fratri Dilectissimo*<sup>1</sup>

W. H. B.

WHEN we were little wandering boys,  
And every hill was blue and high,  
On ballad ways and martial joys  
We fed our fancies, you and I.  
With Bruce we crouched in bracken shade,  
With Douglas charged the Paynim foes ;  
And oft in moorland noons I played  
Colkitto to your grave Montrose.

The obliterating seasons flow—  
They cannot kill our boyish game.  
Though creeds may change and kings may go,  
Yet burns undimmed the ancient flame.  
While young men in their pride make haste  
The wrong to right, the bond to free,  
And plant a garden in the waste,  
Still rides our Scottish chivalry.

<sup>1</sup> From *Montrose*.



Another end had held your dream—  
To die fulfilled of hope and might,  
To pass in one swift rapturous gleam  
From mortal to immortal light—  
But through long hours of labouring breath  
You watched the world grow small and far,  
And met the constant eyes of Death,  
And haply knew how kind they are.

One boon the Fates relenting gave—  
Not where the scented hill-wind blows  
From cedar thickets lies your grave,  
Nor 'mid the steep Himálayan snows.  
Night calls the stragglers to the nest,  
And at long last 'tis home indeed  
For your far-wandering feet to rest  
Forever by the crooks of Tweed.

In perfect honour, perfect truth,  
And gentleness to all mankind,  
You trod the golden paths of youth,  
Then left the world and youth behind.  
Ah no ! 'Tis we who fade and fail—  
And you from Time's slow torments free  
Shall pass from strength to strength and scale  
The steeps of immortality.

Dear heart, in that serener air,  
If blessed souls may backward gaze,  
Some slender nook of memory spare  
For our old happy moorland days.  
I sit alone, and musing fills  
My breast with pain that shall not die,  
Till once again o'er greener hills  
We ride together, you and I.


1912

*To Lionel Phillips*<sup>1</sup>

TIME, they say, must the best of us capture,  
And travel and battle and gems and gold  
No more can kindle the ancient rapture,  
For even the youngest of hearts grows old.  
But in you, I think, the boy is not over ;  
So take this medley of ways and wars  
As the gift of a friend and a fellow-lover  
Of the fairest country under the stars.

1909

<sup>1</sup> From *Prester John*.



## *To my Father*

*Qui . . . significant se patriam inquirere.*

HE was the Interpreter to mistrustful souls ;  
The wearied feet he led into the cool,  
Calm plain called Ease ; he gave the faint to drink ;  
Dull hearts he brought to the House Beautiful ;  
The timorous knew his heartening on the brink  
Where the Dark River rolls ;  
He drew men from the town of Vanity,  
Past Demas' mine and Castle Doubting's towers,  
To the green hills where the wise Shepherds be,  
And Zion's songs are crooned among the flowers.

1912

## A. E. B.

Arras. Easter Monday, 1917

"I am come from him whom thou hast loved and followed ; and my message is to tell thee that he expects thee at his table to sup with him in his kingdom the next day after Easter."

*The Pilgrim's Progress.*

### I

A MILE or two from Arras town  
The yellow moorland stretches far,  
And from its crest the roads go down  
Like arrows to the front of war.

All day the laden convoys pass,  
The sunburnt troops are swinging by,  
And far above the trampled grass  
The droning planes climb up the sky.

In April when I passed that way  
An April joy was in the breeze ;  
The hollows of the woods were gay  
With slender-stalked anemones.

The horn of Spring was faintly blown,  
Bidding a ransomed world awake,  
Nor could the throbbing batteries drown  
The nesting linnets in the brake.

And as I stood beside the grave,  
Where 'mid your kindly Scots you lie,  
I could not think that one so brave,  
So glad of heart, so kind of eye,

Had found the deep and dreamless rest,  
Which men may crave who bear the scars  
Of weary decades on their breast  
And yearn for slumber after wars.

You scarce had shed your boyhood's years,  
In every vein the blood ran young,  
Your soul uncramped by ageing fears,  
Your tales untold, your songs unsung.

. . . . .  
As if my sorrow to beguile,  
I heard the ballad's bold refrain :  
*I'le lay me downe and bleed a-while,*  
*And then I'le rise and fight again.*

## II

Long, long ago, when all the lands  
Were deep in peace as summer sea,  
God chose His squires, and trained their hands  
For these stern lists of liberty.

You made no careful plans for life,  
Happy with dreams and books and friends,  
Incurious of our worldly strife,  
As dedicate to nobler ends ;

Like some young knight, who kept his sword  
Virgin from common broils that he  
Might flesh it on the Paynim horde  
When Richard stormed through Galilee.

I mind how on the hills of home  
You ever lagged and strayed aside,  
A brooding boy whose thoughts would roam  
O'er gallant fates that might betide.

But not the wildest dream of youth,  
Born of the sunset and the Spring,  
Could match the splendour of the truth  
That waited on your journeying.

The ancient city deep in night,  
The wind among its crumbling spires ;  
The assembly in the chill twilight  
Murky with ghosts of wayward fires ;

The last brave words ; the outward march ;  
The punctual shells, whose ceaseless beat  
Made the dark sky an echoing arch  
Pounded without by demon feet ;

While with the morn wild April blew  
Her snows across the tortured mead,  
The springtide gales that once you knew  
In glens beside the founts of Tweed ;

And then the appointed hour ; the dread  
Gun-flare that turned the sleet to flame,  
When, the long vigil o'er, you led  
Your men to purge the world of shame.

I know that in your soul was then  
No fear to irk or hate to mar,  
But a strong peace and joy as when  
The Sons of God go forth to war.

You did not fall till you had won  
The utmost trench, and knew the pride  
Of a high duty nobly done  
And a great longing satisfied.

You left the line with jest and smile  
And heart that would not bow to pain.  
*I'le lay me downe and bleed a-while,  
And then I'le rise and fight again.*

### III

We cannot grieve that youth so strong  
Should miss the encroaching frosts of age,  
The sordid fears, the unnerving throng  
Of cares that are man's heritage.

A boy in years, you travelled far  
And found perfection in short space ;  
By the stern sacrament of war  
You grew in gifts and powers and grace,



Until, with soul attuned and tried,  
    You reached full manhood, staunch and free,  
And bore a spirit o'er the tide  
    Most ripe for immortality.

We cannot tell what grave pure light  
    Illumes for you our earthly show,  
What heavenly love and infinite  
    Wisdom is yours ; but this we know—

That just beyond our senses' veil  
    You dwell unseen in youth and joy,  
Joy which no languid years can pale,  
    Youth which is younger than the boy.

Your kindly voice enheartens still,  
    Your happy laughter is not dead,  
And when we roam our Border hill  
    You walk beside with lighter tread.

All day where lies your valiant dust  
    The troops go by to hold the line ;—  
They never steel for ward or thrust  
    But you are with them, brother mine.

Still, still you list the ancient tunes,  
    The comrade fire is with you yet ;  
Still, still you lead your worn platoons  
    Beyond the farthest parapet.

And when to chaos and black night  
At last the broken eagles flee,  
Your heart will know the stern delight  
Of his who succours liberty.

. . . . .  
I stood beside your new-made grave  
And as I mused my sorrow fled,  
Save for those mortal thoughts that crave  
For sight of those whom men call dead.

I knew you moved in ampler powers,  
A warrior in a purer strife,  
Walking that world that shall be ours  
When death has called us dead to life.

The rough white cross above your breast,  
The earth ungraced by flower or stone  
Are bivouac marks of those that rest  
One instant ere they hasten on.

More fit such grave than funeral pile,  
Than requiem dirge the ballad strain :  
*I'le lay me downe and bleed a-while,*  
*And then I'le rise and fight again.*

1917

*To Major-General*  
*The Hon. Sir Reginald Talbot, K.C.B.*<sup>1</sup>

**I** TELL of old Virginian ways ;  
And who more fit my tale to scan  
Than you, who knew in far-off days  
The eager horse of Sheridan ;  
Who saw the sullen meads of fate,  
The tattered scrub, the blood-drenched sod,  
Where Lee, the greatest of the great,  
Bent to the storm of God ?

I tell lost tales of savage wars ;  
And you have known the desert sands,  
The camp beneath the silver stars,  
The rush at dawn of Arab bands,  
The fruitless toil, the hopeless dream,  
The fainting feet, the faltering breath,  
While Gordon by the ancient stream  
Waited at ease on death.

<sup>1</sup> From *Salute to Adventurers*.

And now, aloof from camp and field,  
You spend your sunny autumn hours  
Where the green folds of Chiltern shield  
The nooks of Thames amid the flowers:—  
You who have borne that name of pride,  
In honour clean from fear or stain,  
Which Talbot won by Henry's side  
In vanquished Aquitaine.

1914

*To Ferris Greenslet*

THE trout that haunts the Beaverkill  
Will flick the same sarcastic tail,  
When wrongly struck, as him my skill  
Would wile in vain from Tweed or Kale.

The same old tremor of the Spring  
Assails the heart of you and me,  
Nor does the reel less blithely ring  
By Willowemoc than by Dee.

As bright the Amonoosuc streams  
Flit through their silent, scented woods  
As those which haunt my waking dreams  
In Hebridean solitudes.

Your land, old friend, is one with mine,  
Whate'er may hap from time or tide,  
While with St. Izaak the Divine  
We worship at the waterside.

1929

❖

*From the Pentlands, Looking  
North and South*

A ROUND my feet the clouds are drawn  
In the cold mystery of the dawn ;  
No breezes cheer, no guests intrude  
My mossy, mist-clad solitude ;  
When sudden down the steep of sky  
Flames a long, lightening wind. On high  
The steel-blue arch shines clear, and far,  
In the low lands where cattle are,  
Towns smoke. And swift, a haze, a gleam,—  
The Firth lies like a frozen stream,  
Reddening with morn. Tall spires of ships,  
Like thorns about the harbour's lips,  
Now shake faint canvas, now, asleep,  
Their salt, uneasy slumbers keep ;  
While golden-grey o'er kirk and wall  
Day wakes in the ancient capital.

Before me lie the lists of strife,  
The caravanserai of life,

Whence from the gates the merchants go  
On the world's highways ; to and fro  
Sail laden ships ; and in the street  
The lone foot-traveller shakes his feet,  
And in some corner by the fire  
Tells the old tale of heart's desire.  
Thither from alien seas and skies  
Comes the far-quested merchandise :—  
Wrought silks of Broussa, Mocha's ware  
Brown-tinted, fragrant, and the rare  
Thin perfumes that the rose's breath  
Has sought, immortal in her death :  
Gold, gems, and spice, and haply still  
The red rough largess of the hill  
Which takes the sun and bears the vines  
Among the haunted Apennines.  
And he who treads the cobbled street  
To-day in the cold North may meet,  
Come month, come year, the dusky East,  
And share the Caliph's secret feast ;  
Or in the toil of wind and sun  
Bear pilgrim-staff, forlorn, fordone,  
Till o'er the steppe, athwart the sand,  
Gleam the far gates of Samarkand.  
The ringing quay, the weathered face,  
Fair skies, dusk hands, the ocean race,  
The palm-girt isle, the frosty shore,  
Gales and hot suns the wide world o'er,  
Grey North, red South, and burnished West,  
The goals of the old tireless quest,

Leap in the smoke, immortal, free,  
Where shines yon morning fringe of sea.

I turn ;—how still the moorlands lie,  
Sleep-locked beneath the awakening sky !  
The film of morn is silver-grey  
On the young heather, and away,  
Dim, distant, set in ribs of hill,  
Green glens are shining, stream and mill  
Clachan and kirk and garden-ground,  
All silent in the hush profound  
Which haunts alone the hills' recess,  
The antique home of quietness.  
Nor to the folk can piper play  
The tune of " Hills and Far Away,"  
For they are with them. Morn can fire  
No peaks of weary heart's desire,  
Nor the red sunset flame behind  
Some ancient ridge of longing mind.  
For Arcady is here, around,  
In lilt of stream, in the clear sound  
Of lark and moorbird, in the bold  
Gay glamour of the evening gold.  
And so the wheel of seasons moves  
To kirk and market, to mild loves  
And modest hates, and still the sight  
Of brown kind faces, and when night  
Draws dark around with age and fear  
Theirs is the simple hope to cheer.—  
A land of peace where lost romance



And ghostly shine of helm and lance  
Still dwell by castled scarp and lea  
And the lost homes of chivalry,  
And the good fairy folk, my dear,  
Who speak for cunning souls to hear,  
In crook of glen and bower of hill  
Sing of the Happy Ages still.

O Thou to whom man's heart is known,  
Grant me my morning orison.  
Grant me the rover's path—to see  
The dawn arise, the daylight flee,  
In the far wastes of sand and sun !  
Grant me with venturous heart to run  
On the old highway, where in pain  
And ecstasy man strives amain,  
Outstrips his fellows, or, too weak,  
Finds the great rest that wanderers seek !  
Grant me the joy of wind and brine,  
The zest of food, the taste of wine,  
The fighter's strength, the echoing strife,  
The high tumultuous lists of life—  
May I ne'er lag, nor hapless fall,  
Nor weary at the battle-call ! . . .  
But when the even brings surcease,  
Grant me the happy moorland peace ;  
That in my heart's depth ever lie  
That ancient land of heath and sky,  
Where the old rhymes and stories fall  
In kindly, soothing pastoral.

There in the hills sweet silence lies,  
And Death himself wears friendly guise ;  
There be my lot, my twilight stage,  
Dear city of my pilgrimage.

1898

## *The Strong Man Armed*

“ **G**IFT me guerdon and grant me grace,”  
Said the Lord of the North.

“ Nothing I ask thee of gear or place  
Ere I get me forth.

Gift one guerdon to mine and me  
For the shade and the sheen.”

. . . . .

“ Ask and it shall be given unto thee,”  
Said Mary the Queen.

“ May I never falter the wide world through,  
But stand in the gate :  
May my sword bite sharp and my steel ring true  
At the ford and the strait :  
Bide not on bed nor dally with song  
When the strife goeth keen :  
This be my boon from the Gods of the Strong ! ”

. . . . .

“ Be it so,” said the Queen.

“ May I stand in the mist and the clear and the chill,  
In the cycle of wars,  
In the brown of the moss and the grey of the hill  
With my eyes to the stars !  
Gift this guerdon and grant this grace  
That I bid good e’en,  
The sword in the hand and the foot to the race,  
The wind in my teeth and the rain in my face ! ”

“ Be it so,” said the Queen.

1895

## *The Soldier of Fortune*

I HAVE seen thy face in the foray, I have heard thy  
voice in the fray,

When the stars shrunk in the silence, and the wild  
midnights blew.

Men have worn their steel blades, seeking by night and  
day ;

Selling their souls for the vain dreams—I have followed  
the true.

Frosts have dulled the scabbard, suns have furrowed the  
thong,

And the great winds of the north-east have steeled the  
vagrant eye.

So through the world I wander, haggard and fierce and  
strong,

Seeking the goal I see not, toiling I tell not why.

I have loved all good things, song and woman and wine,  
The hearth's red glow in the even, the gladsome face of  
a friend,

The suns and snows of the hill land, the sting of the  
winter's brine,

Dawn and noon and the twilight, day and the daylight's  
end.

I have ridden the old path, ridden it fierce and strong,  
By camp and city and moorland and the grey face of the  
sea.

Wrath abides on my forehead but at my heart a song,  
The ancient wayfaring ballad, the royal chant of the  
free.

For ever in cloud or in maytide Thy voice has been in  
my ear,  
In the quivering mists of battle Thy face has shone like  
a star.

Never the steel ranks broke when the Lord sent forth His  
fear

But Thy hand has held my bridle and girt my soul for  
war.

I am broken and houseless, lost my clan and my name ;  
A stranger treads on my homelands, no heart remem-  
bereth me.—

But be Thou my portion, Lady of dew and flame !  
Little I ask of the red gold, having the winds and thee.

1899

## *The Singer*

COLD blows the drift on the hill,  
Sere is the heather,  
High goes the wind and shrill,  
Mirk is the weather.  
Stout be the front I show,  
Come what the gods send !  
Plaided and girt I go  
Forth to the world's end.

My brain is the stithy of years,  
My heart the red gold  
Which the gods with sharp anguish and tears  
Have wrought from of old.  
In the shining first dawn o' the world,  
I was old as the sky—  
The morning dew on the field  
Is no younger than I.

I am the magician of life,  
The hero of runes ;  
The sorrows of eld and old strife  
Ring clear in my tunes.

The sea lends her minstrel voice,  
The storm-cloud its grey ;  
And ladies have wept at my notes  
Fair ladies and gay.

My home is the rim of the mist,  
The ring of the spray.  
The hart has his corrie, the hawk has her nest,  
But I—the Lost Way.  
Come dawning or noontide, come winter or spring,  
Come leisure, come war,  
I tarry not, I, but my burden I sing  
Beyond and afar.

I sing of lost hopes and old kings  
And the maids of the past ;  
Ye shiver adread at my strings  
But ye heed them at last.  
I sing of cold death and the grave—  
Fools tremble afraid :  
I sing of hot life, and the brave  
Go forth undismayed.

I sleep by the well-head of joy  
And the fountain of pain.  
Man lives, loves, and fights, and then is not—  
I only remain.



Ye mock me and hold me to scorn—  
I seek not your grace ;  
Ye gird me with terror—forlorn,  
I laugh in your face

1898

## *Atta's Song*<sup>1</sup>

I WILL sing of thee,  
Great Sea-Mother,  
Whose white arms gather  
Thy sons in the ending :  
And draw them homeward  
From far sad marches—  
Wild lands in the sunset,  
Bitter shores of the morning—  
Soothe them and guide them  
By shining pathways  
Homeward to thee.

All day I have striven in dark glens  
With parched throat and dim eyes,  
Where the red crags choke the stream  
And dank thickets hide the spear.  
I have spilled the blood of my foes,  
But their wolves have torn my flanks.  
I am faint, O Mother,  
Faint and aweary.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Moon Endureth*—the song of a Lemnian who died at Thermopylæ.

I have longed for thy cool winds  
And thy kind grey eyes  
And thy lover's arms.

At the even I came  
To a land of terrors,  
Of hot swamps where the feet mired  
And streams that flowered red with blood.  
There I strove with thousands,  
Wild-eyed and lost,  
As a lion among serpents.  
—But sudden before me  
I saw the flash  
Of the sweet wide waters  
That wash my homeland  
And mirror the stars of home.  
Then sang I for joy,  
For I knew the Preserver,  
Thee, the Uniter,  
The great Sea-Mother.  
Soon will the light come,  
And the salt winds and the tides  
Will bear me home.

Far in the sunrise,  
Nestled in thy bosom,  
Lies my own green isle.  
Thither wilt thou bear me  
To where, above the sea-cliffs,

Stretch mild meadows, flower-decked, thyme-scented,  
Crisp with sea breezes.  
There my flocks feed  
On sunny uplands,  
Looking over the waters  
To where the mount Saos  
Raises pure snows to God.

Hermes, guide of souls,  
I made thee a shrine in my orchard,  
And round thy olive-wood limbs  
The maidens twined Spring blossoms—  
Violet and helichryse  
And the pale wind flowers.  
Keep thou watch for me,  
For I am coming.  
Tell to my lady  
And to all my kinsfolk  
That I who have gone from them  
Tarry not long, but come swift o'er the sea-path,  
My feet light with joy,  
My eyes bright with longing.  
For little it matters  
Where a man may fall,  
If he fall by the sea-shore ;  
The kind waters await him,  
The white arms are around him,  
And the wise Mother of Men  
Will carry him home.

I who sing  
Wait joyfully on the morning.  
Ten thousand beset me  
And their spears ache for my heart.  
They will crush me and grind me to mire,  
So that none will know the man that once was me.  
But at the first light I shall be gone,  
Singing, flitting o'er the grey waters,  
Outward, homeward,  
To thee, the Preserver,  
Thee, the Uniter,  
Mother the Sea.

1910

## *Processional*<sup>1</sup>

**I**N the ancient orderly places, with a blank and orderly  
mind,

We sit in our green walled gardens and our corn and oil  
increase ;

Sunset nor dawn can wake us, for the face of the heavens  
is kind ;

We light our taper at even and call our comfort peace.

Peaceful our clear horizon ; calm as our sheltered days

Are the liliated meadows we dwell in, the decent highways  
we tread.

Duly we make our offerings, but we know not the God  
we praise,

For He is the God of the living, and we, His children,  
are dead.

I will arise and get me beyond this country of dreams,

Where all is ancient and ordered and hoar with the  
frost of years,

To the land where loftier mountains cradle their wilder  
streams,

And the fruitful earth is blessed with more bountiful  
smiles and tears :—

<sup>1</sup> From *A Lodge in the Wilderness*.

There in the home of the lightnings, where the fear of the  
Lord is set free,  
Where the thunderous midnights fade to the turquoise  
magic of morn,  
The days of man are a vapour, blown from a shoreless sea,  
A little cloud before sunrise, a cry in the void forlorn.

I am weary of men and cities and the service of little things,  
Where the flame-like glories of life are shrunk to a  
candle's ray.  
Smite me, my God, with Thy presence, blind my eyes  
with Thy wings,  
In the heart of Thy virgin earth show me Thy secret  
way !

1906

## *Pierce the Piper's Song*<sup>1</sup>

“WORM at my heart and fever in my head—  
There is no peace for any but the dead.  
Only the dead are beautiful and free.  
*Mortis cupiditas captavit me.*”

1929

## *Sabine's Song*

SUMMER has come with love to town;  
Throstle in bush and lark on down  
Merrily tell their tale-o.  
Folks that pine now drink sunshine  
More strong than winter's ale-o.  
Sweet mistress, why so pale-o?  
I hie to thee, as river to sea,  
When the deer draw to the dale-o.

<sup>1</sup> From *The Blanket of the Dark*.



## *Midwinter's Song*<sup>1</sup>

**D**IANA and her darling crew  
Will pluck your fingers fine,  
And lead you forth right pleasantly  
To drink the honey wine ;—  
To drink the honey wine, my dear,  
And sup celestial air,  
And dance as the young angels dance,—  
Ah, God, that I were there !

1922

<sup>1</sup> From *Midwinter*.

## *Avignon*

1759

*Hearts to break but nane to sell,  
Gear to tine but nane to hain ;—  
We maun dree a weary spell  
Ere our lad comes back again.*

I WALK abroad on winter days,  
When storms have stripped the wide champaign,  
For northern winds have norland ways,  
And scents of Badenoch haunt the rain.  
And by the lipping river path,  
When in the fog the Rhone runs grey,  
I see the heather of the strath,  
And watch the salmon leap in Spey.

The hills are feathered with young trees,—  
I set them for my children's boys.  
I made a garden deep in ease,  
A pleasance for my lady's joys.

Strangers have heired them. Long ago  
She died,—kind fortune thus to die ;  
And my one son by Beaulieu flow  
Gave up the soul that could not lie.

Old, elbow-worn, and pinched I bide  
The final toll the gods may take.  
The laggard years have quenched my pride ;  
They cannot kill the ache, the ache.  
Weep not the dead, for they have sleep  
Who lie at home ; but ah, for me  
In the deep grave my heart will weep  
With longing for my lost countrie.

*Hearts to break but nane to sell,  
Gear to tine but nane to hain ;—  
We maun dree a weary spell  
Ere our lad comes back again.*

1911

## *The Gipsy's Song to the Lady Cassilis*

"Whereupon the Faas, coming down from the Gates of Galloway, did so bewitch my lady that she forgot husband and kin, and followed the tinkler's piping."—Chap-book of the *Raid of Cassilis*.

THE door is open to the wall,  
The air is bright and free ;  
Adown the stair, across the hall,  
And then—the world and me ;  
The bare grey bent, the running stream,  
The fire beside the shore ;  
And we will bid the hearth farewell,  
And never seek it more,  
My love,  
And never seek it more.

And you shall wear no silken gown,  
No maid shall bind your hair ;  
The yellow broom shall be your gem  
Your braid the heather rare.  
Athwart the moor, adown the hill,  
Across the world away ;

The path is long for happy hearts  
That sing to greet the day,  
My love,  
That sing to greet the day.

When morning cleaves the eastern grey,  
And the lone hills are red ;  
When sunsets light the evening way  
And birds are quieted ;  
In autumn noon and springtide dawn,  
By hill and dale and sea,  
The world shall sing its ancient song  
Of hope and joy for thee,  
My love,  
Of hope and joy for thee.

And at the last no solemn stole  
Shall on thy breast be laid ;  
No mumbling priest shall speed thy soul,  
No charnel vault thee shade.  
But by the shadowed hazel copse,  
Aneath the greenwood tree,  
Where airs are soft and waters sing,  
Thou'lt ever sleep by me,  
My love,  
Thou'lt ever sleep by me.

1898

## *Wood Magic*

(9th Century)

I WILL walk warily in the wise woods on the fringes of  
eventide,  
For the covert is full of noises and the stir of nameless  
things.

I have seen in the dusk of the beeches the shapes of the  
lords that ride,  
And down in the marish hollow I have heard the lady  
who sings.

And once in an April gloaming I met a maid on the sward,  
All marble-white and gleaming and tender and wild of  
eye ;—

I, Jehan the hunter, who speak am a grown man, middling  
hard,  
But I dreamt a month of the maid, and wept I knew  
not why.

Down by the edge of the firs, in a coppice of heath and  
vine,  
Is an old moss-grown altar, shaded by briar and bloom,

Denys, the priest, hath told me 'twas the lord Apollo's  
shrine

In the days ere Christ came down from God to the  
Virgin's womb.

I never go past but I doff my cap and avert my eyes—

(Were Denys to catch me I trow I'd do penance for  
half a year.)—

For once I saw a flame there and the smoke of a sacrifice,  
And a voice spake out of the thicket that froze my soul  
with fear.

Wherefore to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,  
Mary the Blessed Mother, and the kindly Saints as well,  
I will give glory and praise, and them I cherish the most,  
For they have the keys of Heaven, and save the soul  
from Hell.

But likewise I will spare for the lord Apollo a grace,  
And a bow for the lady Venus—as a friend but not as  
a thrall.

'Tis true they are out of Heaven, but some day they may  
win the place ;

For gods are kittle cattle, and a wise man honours them  
all.

1911

## *Plain Folk*

SINCE flaming angels drove our sire  
From Eden's green to walk the mire,  
We are the folk that tilled the plot  
And ground the grain and boiled the pot.  
We hung the garden terraces  
That pleased Queen Semiramis.  
Our toil it was and burdened brain  
That set the Pyramids o'er the plain.  
We marched from Egypt at God's call  
And drilled the ranks and fed them all,  
But never Eshcol's wine drank we—  
Our bones lay 'twixt the sand and sea.  
We officered the brazen bands  
That rode the far and desert lands ;  
We bore the Roman eagles forth  
And made great roads from south to north ;  
White cities flowered for holiday,  
But we, forgot, died far away.  
And when the Lord called folk to Him,  
And some sat blissful at His feet,  
Ours was the task the bowl to brim,  
For on this earth even saints must eat.



The serfs have little need to think,  
Only to work and sleep and drink ;  
A rover's life is boyish play,  
For when cares press he rides away ;  
The king sits on his ruby throne,  
And calls the whole wide world his own.  
But we, the plain folk, noon and night  
No surcease of our toil we see ;  
We cannot ease our cares by flight,  
For Fortune holds our loves in fee.  
We are not slaves to sell our wills,  
We are not kings to ride the hills,  
But patient men who jog and dance  
In the dull wake of circumstance ;  
Loving our little patch of sun,  
Too weak our homely dues to shun,  
Too nice of conscience, or too free,  
To prate of rights—if rights there be.

The Scriptures tell us that the meek  
The earth shall have to work their will ;  
It may be they shall find who seek,  
When they have topped the last long hill.  
Meantime we serve among the dust  
For at the best a broken crust,  
A word of praise, and now and then  
The joy of turning home again,  
But freemen still we fall or stand,  
We serve because our hearts command.  
Though kings may boast and knights cavort,

We broke the spears at Agincourt.  
When odds were wild and hopes were down,  
We died in droves by Leipsic town.  
Never a field was starkly won  
But *ours* the dead that faced the sun.  
The slave will fight because he must,  
The rover for his ire and lust,  
The king to pass an idle hour  
Or feast his fattened heart with power ;  
But we, because we choose, we choose,  
Nothing to gain and much to lose,  
Holding it happier far to die  
Than falter in our decency.

The serfs may know an hour of pride  
When the high flames of tumult ride.  
The rover has his days of ease  
When he has sacked his palaces.  
A king may live a year like God  
When prostrate peoples drape the sod.  
We ask for little,—leave to tend  
Our modest fields : at daylight's end  
The fires of home : a wife's caress :  
The star of children's happiness.  
Vain hope ! 'Tis ours for ever and aye  
To do the job the slaves have marred,  
To clear the wreckage of the fray,  
And please our kings by working hard.  
Daily we mend their blunderings,  
Swashbucklers, demagogues, and kings !

What if we rose ?—If some fine morn,  
Unnumbered as the autumn corn,  
With all the brains and all the skill  
Of stubborn back and steadfast will,  
We rose and, with the guns in train,  
Proposed to deal the cards again,  
And, tired of sitting up o' nights,  
Gave notice to our parasites,  
Announcing that in future they  
Who paid the piper should call the lay ?  
Then crowns would tumble down like nuts,  
And wastrels hide in water-butts ;  
Each lamp-post as an epilogue  
Would hold a pendent demagogue.  
Then would the world be for the wise.  
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But ah ! the plain folk never rise.—

1911

## *Stocks and Stones*

The Chief Topiawari replies to Sir Walter Raleigh, who upbraided him for idol worship.

MY gods, you say, are idols dumb,  
Which men have wrought from wood or clay,  
Carven with chisel, shaped with thumb,  
A morning's task, an evening's play.  
You bid me turn my face on high  
Where the blue heaven the sun enthrones,  
And serve a viewless deity,  
Nor make my bow to stocks and stones.

My lord, I am not skilled in wit,  
Nor wise in priestcraft, but I know  
That fear to man is spur and bit  
To jog and curb his fancies' flow.  
He fears and loves, for love and awe  
In mortal souls may well unite  
To fashion forth the perfect law  
Where Duty takes to wife Delight.

But on each man *one* Fear awaits  
And chills his marrow like the dead.—  
He cannot worship what he hates  
Or make a god of naked Dread.

The homeless winds that twist and race,  
The heights of cloud that veer and roll,  
The unplumb'd Abyss, the drift of Space—  
These are the fears that drain the soul.

Ye dauntless ones from out the sea  
Fear nought. Perchance your gods are strong  
To rule the air where grim things be,  
And quell the deeps with all their throng.  
For me, I dread not fire nor steel,  
Nor aught that walks in open light,  
But fend me from the endless Wheel,  
The voids of Space, the gulfs of Night.

Wherefore my brittle gods I make  
Of friendly clay and kindly stone,—  
Wrought with my hands, to serve or break,  
From crown to toe my work, my own.  
My eyes can see, my nose can smell,  
My fingers touch their painted face ;  
They weave their little homely spell  
To warm me from the cold of Space.

My gods are wrought of common stuff  
For human joys and mortal tears ;  
Weakly, perchance, yet staunch enough  
To build a barrier 'gainst my fears,  
Where, lowly but secure, I wait  
And hear without the strange winds blow.—  
I cannot worship what I hate,  
Or serve a god I dare not know.

1911

## *Babylon*

The Song of Nehemiah's Workmen.

*HOW many miles to Babylon ?  
Three score and ten.*

*Can I get there by candle-light ?  
Yes, and back again.*

We are come back from Babylon,  
Out of the plains and the glare,  
To the little hills of our own country  
And the sting of our kindred air ;  
To the ruckle of stones on the red rock's edge  
Which Kedron cleaves like a sword.  
We will build the walls of Zion again,  
To the glory of Zion's Lord.

Now is no more of dalliance  
By the reedy waters in Spring,  
When we sang of home, and sighed, and dreamed,  
And wept on remembering.  
Now we are back in our ancient hills  
Out of the plains and the sun ;  
But before we make it a dwelling-place  
There's a wonderful lot to be done.

The walls are to build from west to east,  
From Gihon to Olivet,  
Waters to lead and wells to clear,  
And the garden furrows to set.  
From the Sheep Gate to the Fish Gate  
Is a welter of mire and mess ;  
And southward over the common lands  
Is a dragon's wilderness.

The Courts of the Lord are a heap of dust  
Where the hill winds whistle and race,  
And the noble pillars of God His House  
Stand in a ruined place.  
In the Holy of Holies foxes lair,  
And owls and night-birds build.  
There's a deal to do ere we patch it anew  
As our father Solomon willed.

Now is the day of the ordered life  
And the law which all obey.  
We toil by rote and speak by note  
And never a soul dare stray.  
Ever among us a lean old man  
Keepeth his watch and ward,  
Crying, " The Lord hath set you free ;  
Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

A goodly task we are called unto,  
A task to dream on o' nights,—  
Work for Judah and Judah's God,  
Setting our land to rights ;

Everything fair and all things square  
And straight as a plummet string.—  
Is it mortal guile, if once in a while  
Our thoughts go wandering ? . . .

We were not slaves in Babylon,  
For the gate of our souls lay free,  
There in that vast and sunlit land  
On the edges of mystery.  
Daily we wrought and daily we thought,  
And we chafed not at rod and power,  
For Sinim, Sabaea, and dusky Hind  
Talked to us hour by hour.

The man who lives in Babylon  
May poorly sup and fare,  
But loves and lures from the ends of the earth  
Beckon him everywhere.  
Next year he too may have sailed strange seas  
And conquered a diadem ;  
For kings are as common in Babylon  
As crows in Bethlehem.

Here we are bound to the common round  
In a land which knows not change.  
Nothing befalleth to stir the blood  
Or quicken the heart to range ;  
Never a hope that we cannot plumb  
Or a stranger visage in sight,—  
At the most a sleek Samaritan  
Or a ragged Amorite.



Here we are sober and staid of soul  
Working beneath the law,  
Settled amid our fathers' dust,  
Seeing the hills they saw.  
All things fixed and determinate,  
Chiselled and squared by rule.—  
Is it mortal guile once in a while  
To try to escape from school ?

We will go back to Babylon,  
Silently one by one,  
Out from the hills and the laggard brooks  
To the streams that brim in the sun.  
Only a moment, Lord, we crave,  
To breathe and listen and see.—  
Then we start anew with muscle and thew  
To hammer trestles for Thee.

1911

## *The Song of the Sea Captain*

Diego d'Albuquerque, brother of the great Affonso, a knight of the Portuguese Order of Jesus Christ, having landed on the coast north of Zanzibar, wandered to the Abyssinian highlands, where he saw and loved Prester John's daughter, Melissa, a cousin of the Lady of Tripoli (*La Princesse Lointaine*). He was slain off Goa in the great fight with the Sultan of Muscat.

**I** SAIL a lone sea captain  
Around the southern seas ;  
Worn as my cheek, the flag of Christ  
Floats o'er me on the breeze.  
By green isle and by desert,  
By little white-walled town,  
To west wind and to east wind  
I lead my galleons down.

I know the black south-easter,  
I know the drowsy calms  
When the slow tide creeps shoreward  
To lave the idle palms.  
Of many a stark sea battle  
The Muslim foe can tell,  
When their dark dhows I sent to crabs  
And their dark souls to hell.

Small reck have I of Muslim,  
Small reck of winds and seas,  
The waters are my pathway  
To bring me to my ease.  
The dawns that burn above me  
Are torches set to light  
My footsteps to a garden  
Of roses red and white.

. . . . .  
Five months we stood from Lagos,  
While, scant of food and sleep,  
We tracked da Gama's highroad  
Across the Guinea deep.  
All spent we were with watching  
When, ghostly as a dream,  
The Bona Esperanza cape  
Rose dark upon the beam.

Then by the low green inlets  
We groped our passage forth,  
Outside the shallow surf-bars  
We headed for the north.  
Sofala gave us victual,  
Inyaka ease and rest,  
But of the wayside harbours  
I loved Melinda best.

'Twas on a day in April,  
The Feast of Rosaly,

We beached our weary vessels,  
Cried farewell to the sea,  
And with ten stout companions  
And hearts with youth made bold  
We sought the inland mountains  
Of which our fathers told.

No chart had we or counsel  
To guide our weary feet,  
To north and west we wandered  
In drought and dust and heat,  
Till o'er the steaming tree-tops  
We saw the far-off dome  
Of mystic icy mountains,  
And knew the Prester's home.

Nine days we clomb the foothills,  
Nine days the mountain wall,  
Sheer cliff and ancient forest  
And fretted waterfall ;  
And on the tenth we entered  
A meadow cool and deep,  
And in the Prester's garden  
We laid us down to sleep.

Long time we fared like princes  
In palaces of stone,  
For never guest goes cheerless  
Who meets with Prester John :

Where woodlands mount to gardens  
And gardens climb to snows  
And wells of living water  
Sing rondels to the rose.

And there among the roses,  
More white and red than they,  
There walked the gleaming lady,  
The princess far away.  
Dearer her golden tresses  
Than the high pomp of wars,  
And deep and still her eyes as lakes  
That brood beneath the stars.

There walked we and there spoke we  
Of things that may not cease,  
Of life and death and God's dear love  
And the eternal peace.  
For in that shadowed garden  
The world had grown so small  
That one white girl in one white hand  
Could clasp and hold it all.

I craved the Prester's blessing,  
I kissed his kingly hand :  
" Too soon has come the parting  
From this fair mountain land.

But shame it were for Christian knight  
To take his leisure here  
When o'er the broad and goodly earth  
The Muslim sends his fear.

“ I go to gird my sword on,  
To drive my fleets afar,  
To court the wrath of tempests,  
The dusty toils of war.  
But when my vows are ended,  
Then, joyous from the fray,  
I come to claim my lady,  
The princess far away.”

. . . . .

I sail a lone sea captain  
Across the southern seas ;  
Worn as my cheek, the flag of Christ  
Still flaunts upon the breeze.  
By green isle and by desert,  
By little white-walled town,  
To west wind and to east wind  
I lead my galleons down.

But in the starkest tempest,  
And in the drowsy heats,  
Where on the shattered coral  
The far-drawn breaker beats :

In seas of dreaming water,  
And in the wind-swept spray,  
I see my snow-white lady,  
The princess far away.

Sometimes in inland places  
We march for weary days,  
Where thorns parch in the noontide  
Or fens are dark with haze ;—  
For me 'tis but a march of dreams,  
For ever, clear and low,  
I hear cool waters falling  
In the garden of the snow.

Small reck have I of Muslim,  
Small reck of sands or seas ;  
The wide world is my pathway  
To lead me to my ease.  
The dawns that burn above me  
Are torches set to light  
My footsteps to a garden  
Of roses red and white.

1905

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## *Antiphilus of Byzantium*

*Anth. Pal. ix. 546.*

GIVE me a mat on the deck,  
When the awnings sound to the blows of the spray,  
And the hearthstones crack with the flames a-back  
And the pot goes bubbling away.  
Give me a boy to cook my broth ;  
For table a ship's plank lacking a cloth,  
And never a fork or knife ;  
And, after a game with a rusty pack,  
The bo'sun's whistle to pipe us back—  
That's the fortune fit for a king,  
For Oh ! I love common life !

1895



## *An Echo of Meleager*

SCORN not my love, proud child. The summers wane.  
Long ere the topmost mountain snows have gone  
The Spring is flitting; 'neath the April rain  
For one brief day flowers laugh on Helicon.  
The breeze that fans thy honeyed cheek this noon  
To-morrow will be blasts that scourge the main,  
And youth and joy and laughter fleet too soon.—  
Scorn not my love, proud child. The summers wane.

To-day the rose blooms by the garden plot,  
The swallows twitter 'neath the Parian dome;  
But soon the roses fall and lie forgot,  
And soon the swallows will be turning home.  
Tempt not the arrows of the Cyprian's eye,  
Vex not the god that will not brook disdain;—  
Love is the port to which the wise barks fly.  
Scorn not my love, proud child. The summers wane.

1910

## *Oxford Prologizes*<sup>1</sup>

WELCOME I give you, gentles all,  
Who honour this, my carnival ;  
For mine the prose and mine the rhymes,  
Mine the choragus and the mimes,  
And not a word that's said or sung  
But springs from Oxford pen or tongue.

From that first day when men descried  
The double path o'er Isis' tide  
And set a city by the fords,  
Through the dark wars of books and swords,  
I fenced a little citadel  
Where might the gentler Muses dwell.  
And not alone Athene reigned  
Among my towers ; Artemis deigned  
To lead her dance ; my youthful quire  
Has heard Apollo tune his lyre ;  
Through tributary hamlets ran  
The piping of the rustic Pan ;

<sup>1</sup> Lines spoken by Miss Lilian Braithwaite at a *matinée* in aid of the Oxford Preservation Trust at the Haymarket Theatre, February 25, 1930.

By Fyfield elm and Bampton plain  
The morris-dancers wove their chain,  
And masques with lute and virginal  
Have greeted kings in Christ Church hall.  
Though changed the times, the comic boot  
Yet treads my boards ; Euterpe's flute  
Sounds still for chosen lass and lad,  
And, when the bonfire lights the quad,  
With flying hair the orgiast raves,  
The cymbals clash, the thyrsus waves.

This day a graver purpose runs  
Through these the revels of my sons.  
'Tis not to grace some holy day,  
Or band my young in summer play,  
Or loose from Cardinal's purse the string,  
Or win a smile from wandering King,  
But ye, my children, far and wide,  
To call confederate to my side,  
For the old love, for the old pride.

Where once the modest pilgrim strode,  
Immodest myriads throng my road,  
Not borne on horse or foot, but such  
As nurse the inviolable clutch,  
Devour the steep and scour the lea  
With onward impulse all too free.  
The rawest rufous cabins rise  
Above my shy fritillaries ;  
My secret hills are cloven and scarred,

And narrower grows my zone of sward.  
Wherefore, despoiled, I make my prayer  
For succour to my children ere  
Some dunce, not Scotus, fling his net  
Of drab o'er my green coronet.

For centuries seven my questing sons  
I drew by every road that runs.  
Rough were the paths they paced of old,  
The miry track by heath and wold.  
By forest wilds and swollen streams,  
In winter snows and April gleams.  
They begged their bread and paid their score  
With trifles from the Muses' store,  
In many a wayside hostelry  
With Peter Turph and Stephen Sly.  
But, whether on weary feet they came,  
By laggard coach, by rail or car,  
From fields of home, from lands afar,  
My guerdon was for each the same.  
I gave them youth's divine surmise  
Mirrored in my eternal eyes ;  
I gave them for a sanctuary  
My cloisters, where enchantments lie  
Unbroken since the Golden Age ;  
And, for an ampler heritage,  
Green neighbour fields and quiet rills  
Cradled by soft, deep-bosomed hills.  
I gave them spell of antique arts,  
And ancient dreams of seeking hearts.

And, as a panoply for strife,  
Whate'er the sages taught of life.  
But most I gave them loyalties,  
The soul to dare, the wing to rise,  
The dear companionships of youth,  
And the clear eye that welcomes truth.

They came from far ; farther they fared.  
Whate'er man's venturous heart has dared,  
So dared my sons ; in toil and dearth  
They blazed the untrodden trails of earth,  
Harnessed the flood and tilled the sands,  
Set gardens in the desert lands.  
They freed the slave, and raised the mean.  
And curbed the lawless, and made clean  
The heart of darkness.

On the grave  
Of such no English grasses wave ;  
Ganges and Nile, not Isis, keep  
A vigil o'er their timeless sleep.  
But in their toils they nursed apart,  
Deep in the treasury of the heart,  
The thought of me, a charm to bless,  
A palm-tree in the wilderness.  
They saw beyond the sand dunes gleam  
The summer deeps of Hinksey stream.  
And breathed, when swamps lay dank and still,  
An April wind on Cumnor hill.

*Esto perpetua !* This my plea  
To all whose hearts are vowed to me.

My sons out of the world I draw,  
And mould them to my gentle law,  
And send them back to play their part  
In court and senate, field and mart,  
For ever mine, if once they hear  
My secret whispered in their ear.  
But for such task I needs must dwell  
Out of the strife, a citadel  
With warders at the outer gate,  
A place enclosed, inviolate.  
So may I in its purity  
Preserve the truth that maketh free  
From taint of narrow loss and gain ;  
So may my children still be fain  
To hallow with their dreams my town,  
The Tripled as the Violet Crown ;  
And, like the wise of old, to see  
Some bloom of immortality  
In the dear ways their youth has trod—  
City of Cecrops—City of God.

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